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Committee on Government Administrations and Elections
Room 2200
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

RE: Opposition to proposed bills which may delay or eliminate the requirements for municipalities to post agendas, minutes and other documents on the Internet (Proposed Bills 5384, 5371, 5379, 5365, 5218, 5368 and 0068)

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Frank DeFelice, and I presently serve the Town of Durham as the Chairman of its Public Safety Committee, a position I have held for the past ten years; and as a Commissioner on its Planning and Zoning Commission, a position I have held for the past eight years.

I am writing in opposition to proposed bills which may delay or eliminate requirements for municipalities to post agendas, minutes and other documents on the Internet.

Passage of these bills will have a chilling effect on communications with our citizens, who have come to rely on municipal websites as the preferred medium for obtaining information on town meetings, agendas, minutes and other documents. A posting on the town's website is, more often than not, the only one seen by our citizens, who would not normally take time from their jobs to visit Town Hall to view the Meeting Boards, or who may not be mobile enough to do so.

Local newspapers cannot perform an equivalent function, since they do not print the agendas and minutes from the numerous committees in each town they cover; and the cost of paid advertising for posting this information would be prohibitively expensive.

Some may claim that passage of either bill will save our municipalities money; however I submit that quite the opposite is true.

First, the processing of requests under the Freedom of Information Act is drastically reduced; since, in most cases the information is readily available for all to see and print; as they see fit.

Second, municipal websites serve as the repositories for the vast historical data on committee actions; preventing "re-invention of the wheel" by similar future committees.

Third, the ready availability of this information on the internet has increased citizen participation in our town governments. These citizens bring their good ideas to the table; thus providing better solutions for our towns.

Fourth, requiring the posting of this information on the internet allows citizens who may be away from town, immobile, serving on military duty or for those of us who maintain second homes or summer cottages, to monitor the actions of committees and commissions in other towns while we are away.

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People from all walks of life have come to depend on the Internet for news and information. Even today, I used your own website (www.cga.ct.gov) to learn that you were discussing this topic; something I would certainly not know in any other way. And I will read the results of your deliberations on this same website. *If it makes sense for the Legislature to post this type of information on the internet, why would it make any less sense for a municipality to do so?*

If municipalities desire relief regarding the posting of legal notices, I would submit that it would make more sense to eliminate the requirements for posting legal notices in the newspaper, than to eliminate the requirement for posting of agendas, minutes and other documents on the internet.

I ask that you support transparency in our municipal governments, by voting **against** bills which delay or eliminate the requirement for municipalities to post agendas, minutes and other documents on the Internet.

Respectfully,

Frank C. DeFelice